Walsh: 'The Iran-Contra Coverup . . .

Reuter

Following is independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh's written statement in response to the presidential pardons in the Iran-contra scandal:

President Bush's pardon of Caspar Weinberger and other Iran-contra defendants undermines the principle that no man is above the law. It demonstrates that powerful people with powerful allies can commit serious crimes in high office—deliberately abusing the public trust—without consequence. Weinberger, who faced four felony charges, deserved to be tried by a jury of citizens. Although it is the president's prerogative to grant pardons, it is every American's right that the criminal justice system be administered fairly, regardless of a person's rank and connections.

The Iran-contra coverup, which has continued for more than six years, has now been completed with the pardon of Caspar Weinberger. We will make a full report on our findings to Congress and the public describing the details and extent of this coverup.

Weinberger's early and deliberate decision to conceal and withhold extensive contemporaneous notes of the Iran-contra matter radically altered the official investigations and possibly forestalled timely impeachment proceedings against President Reagan and other officials. Weinberger's notes contain evidence of a conspiracy among the high-

Has Now Been Completed'

est-ranking Reagan administration officials to lie to Congress and the American public. Because the notes were withheld from investigators for years, many of the leads were impossible to follow, key witnesses had purportedly forgotten what was said and done, and statutes of limitation had expired.

Weinberger's concealment of notes is part of a disturbing pattern of deception and obstruction that permeated the highest levels of the Reagan and Bush administrations. This office was informed only within the past two weeks, on December 11, 1992, that President Bush had failed to produce to investigators his own highly relevant contemporaneous notes, despite repeated requests for such documents. The production of these notes is still ongoing and will lead to appropriate action. In light of President Bush's own misconduct, we are gravely concerned about his decision to pardon others who lied to Congress and obstructed official investigations.